

Washington, DC -- Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today wrote to the leaders of a key U.S. House panel to request additional funding for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Aquatic Plant Control Research Program (APCRP) - a federal program that helps local communities combat the spread of dangerous invasive species such as hydrilla.

"I am particularly concerned about the infestation of the aquatic invasive plant species hydrilla, which has recently been found in large quantities in Cayuga Lake in upstate New York," Hinchey wrote. "If allowed to grow, hydrilla will infest the entire 38 mile long lake and quickly move beyond the region to the Great Lakes via the vast network of connected water bodies. This will cause severe economic hardship on large portions of New York at a time when our local economy can least afford it. In a matter of weeks this invasive plant, which can grow an inch per day, has become so widespread that the City of Ithaca has declared an environmental state of emergency. In an effort to eradicate hydrilla all boating use is presently prohibited in the Cayuga Lake inlet, which includes the largest inland marina in New York. The economic impact of this plant is already being felt due to lost tourism and recreational opportunities."

The U.S. Senate's Fiscal Year 2012 Energy and Water Appropriations bill included \$4 million for APCRP to continue its work developing long-term, money saving remedies for controlling invasive aquatic plants. However, the House legislation as currently written provides no funding at all for the program. Hinchey has asked the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development to adopt the Senate's funding level. The full text of his letter follows:

October 13, 2011

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Visclosky:

As you work to negotiate final language with the Senate for the FY 2012 Energy and Water Development appropriations bill, I am writing to express my strong support for the funding the Senate Appropriations Committee provided for the Army Corps of Engineers' Aquatic Plant Control Research Program (APCRP). Given the growing and costly impact of invasive plant species on waterways throughout the nation, it is critically important that the research being done by APCRP is continued so that we can deal with this growing problem.

I am particularly concerned about the infestation of the aquatic invasive plant species hydrilla, which has recently been found in large quantities in Cayuga Lake in upstate New York. If allowed to grow, hydrilla will infest the entire 38 mile long lake and quickly move beyond the region to the Great Lakes via the vast network of connected water bodies. This will cause severe economic hardship on large portions of New York at a time when our local economy can least afford it. In a matter of weeks this invasive plant, which can grow an inch per day, has become so widespread that the City of Ithaca has declared an environmental state of emergency. In an effort to eradicate hydrilla all boating use is presently prohibited in the Cayuga Lake inlet, which includes the largest inland marina in New York. The economic impact of this plant is already being felt due to lost tourism and recreational opportunities.

While efforts are underway to combat hydrilla using current practices, it's clear that better solutions are needed to help this region and the 31 other states where hydrilla has been found spreading and infesting waters. Commercial herbicides are being used to combat hydrilla with limited success, partly due to the plant's ability to develop resistance. Additionally, the use of chemicals is costly and presents public health concerns. Clearly, new cost-effective integrated management strategies are needed to eliminate the threat of hydrilla and other newly identified invasive plants. APCRP is ideally suited for addressing this challenge and is currently working to develop a cost-effective solution that can be used in Cayuga Lake. For instance, APCRP is in the process of developing insect biocontrol methods for certain types of invasive plants, but this research will discontinue if funding is eliminated.

The Senate's FY 2012 Energy and Water Appropriations bill included \$4 million for APCRP to continue its work developing long-term, money saving remedies for controlling invasive aquatic plants. I strongly support this investment and urge you include this funding in any final agreement you reach. These resources will help protect our waterways and prevent the economic hardship that will occur if cost effective means for combating invasive species are not advanced.

Sincerely,

Maurice D. Hinchey